

R E Q U E S T F O R P R O P O S A L S

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION RIGOR ANALYSIS

Issued: October 2, 2008

Submission Deadline: November 7, 2008

Postsecondary Education Rigor Analysis
Senator Brian Schoenjahn, Temporary Co-chairperson
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Iowa General Assembly

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Request for Proposals Postsecondary Education Rigor Analysis

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I. Introduction — General Information

A. Legislative Background. 2008 Iowa Acts, Chapter 1181 (H.F. 2679) directed the Legislative Council to commission a study by an independent entity to evaluate and compare the rigor of the first two years of study at community colleges and Regents universities. On June 13, 2008, the Legislative Council approved establishment of a committee charged with issuing a request for proposals to contract for an independent entity to analyze and compare postsecondary education rigor as described in the legislation. The Legislative Council did not approve a specific contract expenditure amount for the analysis.

B. Request for Proposals. The Postsecondary Education Rigor Analysis Committee is issuing this Request for Proposals to obtain the services of a consultant, either an individual or a firm, with expertise in the area of postsecondary education to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the rigor of the first two years of coursework offered by Iowa's community colleges and Regents universities, at the direction of the Committee and as outlined in the Scope of Services.

C. Terms Defined. For purposes of this Request for Proposals, "RFP" refers to this Request for Proposals, and "Committee" refers to the Postsecondary Education Rigor Analysis Committee or a successor legislative committee or subcommittee designated to act on behalf of the Postsecondary Education Rigor Analysis Committee.

D. RFP and Deliverables Timelines

Event	Date
RFP Issued	Thursday, October 2, 2008
Deadline for Bidders to Submit Questions	4:00 p.m., Tuesday, October 21, 2008
Responses to Bidders Questions	Friday, October 31, 2008
Deadline for Bidders to Submit Proposals	4:00 p.m., Friday, November 7, 2008
Selection of Bidder as Potential Consultant	Friday, November 21, 2008
Execution of Contract	Monday, December 1, 2008
Deliverables	Date
Submission of First Progress Report	January 2009
First In-person Report to Committee	February 2009
Submission of Second Progress Report	March 2009
Submission of Final Report	June 2009
Final Report Presented In Person to Committee	June 2009

II. Scope of Services

The consultant shall perform the following services:

A. Analysis Specifics. Conduct a comprehensive postsecondary education rigor analysis which, at a minimum, will do the following:

1. Determine the barriers to the seamless transition of community college students and graduates to Regents universities, including the transfer of credits earned for community college arts and sciences and vocational technical coursework to the universities and to the universities' colleges and the advantages and disadvantages of uniformity of curriculum and diversity of curriculum, and also do the following:
 - a. Identify and review solutions to the barriers identified, which shall include but not be limited to solutions which have been used successfully by other states.
 - b. For each solution identified and reviewed, evaluate the potential costs of instituting any proposed or identified action.
 - c. In fulfilling the requirements of this subsection 1, the consultant shall, at a minimum, review the most recent report on statewide articulation agreements issued by the Liaison Advisory Committee on Transfer Students and assess the functionality and benefits of the Regents universities web page (www.transferiowa.org), and may seek from the Committee any additional relevant information in the Committee's possession.

2. Determine how community college students, including students who are enrolled under a district-to-community college sharing agreement or concurrent enrollment program, perform on subsequent coursework at Regents universities.
3. Measure and review the levels of compliance of each community college and Regents university with the faculty accreditation standards of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and other accrediting agencies, and, in the case of community colleges, with the provisions of Iowa Code Section 260C.36.
4. Define rigorous college level coursework, identify and review measures for determining whether an institution's coursework meets the definition, and apply those measures to the coursework provided by the community colleges and Regents universities.
5. In meeting the requirements of this Scope of Services, the consultant shall utilize Iowa data available from community colleges, the state Department of Education, and the State Board of Regents, each of which shall provide reports or other information as requested by the consultant as soon as reasonably possible.

B. Deliverables. The consultant shall adhere to the summary of delivery times in Part I, Paragraph D, of this RFP for the deliveries specified in this Paragraph B. The dates listed shall serve as a guideline for the consultant and may be modified and made definite by mutual agreement of the Committee and the consultant. The consultant shall make the following deliveries to the Committee:

1. A first written progress report.
2. An in-person meeting between the consultant and the Committee regarding the first written progress report.
3. A second written progress report.
4. Consultant's final report.
5. An in-person presentation of consultant's final report.

C. Progress and Final Report Requirements

1. Form of Reports. The consultant shall submit a printed version and one uncompressed electronic version drafted in Microsoft Word® or a similar word processing program for each of the two written progress reports, in-person report presentation materials, and the final report that are required to be submitted to the Committee. If color is used in any of the reports, the color shall be used in a manner capable of being reproduced and easily read in a black and white format. It is anticipated that each report will be posted on the Iowa General Assembly's Internet site.

2. **Number of Printed Copies.** The consultant shall submit 25 printed copies of each of the two written progress reports and 150 printed copies of the final report.

D. Rights to Material Produced. Materials produced in whole or in part by the consultant pursuant to this analysis are not subject to copyright in the United States or in any other country. The Committee and the Iowa General Assembly have unrestricted authority to publish, disclose, distribute, and otherwise use, in whole or in part, any data, reports, or other materials compiled or produced pursuant to this analysis.

E. Release and Acceptance of Findings and Reports. The Committee shall be responsible for establishing requirements and restrictions regarding the release of findings and reports by the consultant and the acceptance of the findings and reports by the Committee.

III. General Terms, Conditions, and Limitations

A. Nonobligatory

1. **No State Obligation.** This RFP requests the submission of proposals and should not be construed as an intent, commitment, or promise by the Committee, the Iowa General Assembly, or the State of Iowa for the acquisition of materials or services. The Committee, the Iowa General Assembly, and the State of Iowa are not obligated in any way by the issuance of this RFP and the Committee reserves the right to reject any or all proposals in whole or in part received by reason of this RFP.
2. **No Payment Obligation.** The Committee, the Iowa General Assembly, and the State of Iowa will not pay for any information or services provided by any bidder, or expenses incurred by any bidder, under the terms of this RFP. The selection of a bidder means that the Committee will enter into good faith negotiations with the bidder with the expectation of executing a contract based on this RFP and the bidder's proposal. The Committee may terminate negotiations at any time and select a new bidder or issue a new RFP.

B. Fixed-price Contract. Except as otherwise provided in this RFP, or agreed to by the parties, the total price paid to a consultant must be fixed as provided in a contract executed between the parties. No special fees or expenses shall be charged directly to the Committee, the Iowa General Assembly, or the State of Iowa.

C. Contract Terms and Conditions. The Committee may make a preliminary selection of a bidder as a prospective consultant conditioned upon the bidder's acceptance of standard terms and conditions included in the Committee's contracts, including but not limited to choice of law and forum, compliance with applicable state law, avoidance of conflicts of interest,

subcontracting restrictions, nondiscrimination requirements, payment provisions conditioned upon delivery of reports, indemnification, compliance and termination procedures, and liquidated damages and specific performance provisions.

D. Contract Execution Deadline. The Committee expects that a contract will be executed between the Committee and the consultant not later than the date specified in Part I, Paragraph D. A bidder who desires to review a model contract should contact the Legislative Services Agency.

E. Property Rights

1. General Assembly Assumes Ownership. Proposals submitted in response to this RFP are the property of the Iowa General Assembly. The Committee will serve as custodian of the information. The contents of the proposal will not be considered proprietary or a trade secret. The Iowa General Assembly, the Committee, and the Legislative Services Agency will not act as a party in any lawsuit to protect the rights of a potential bidder, bidder, selected consultant, or the consultant or a subcontractor of the consultant.
2. Disclosure of Proposals. The laws of Iowa require that at the conclusion of the selection process all proposals be placed in the public domain and be open to inspection by interested parties.

F. Internet Site. The Legislative Services Agency's Internet site is: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us>. A bidder may obtain an electronic copy of this RFP, bidder questions and responses, and other relevant information at that location.

G. Contact. The Committee encourages communication between the administrative staff of the Committee and potential bidders, including bidder questions. All communications concerning this RFP, and any bidder questions, should be addressed to:

Ms. Kathleen Hanlon
Legislative Services Agency
State Capitol Building
1007 E. Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Telephone: (515) 281-3847
FAX: (515) 281-8451
E-mail: kathy.hanlon@legis.state.ia.us

H. Interviews. The Committee reserves the right to personally interview a select number of potential bidders or bidders who have completed projects similar to that requested in this RFP or who otherwise demonstrate exceptional qualifications to meet the requirements of this RFP and the Committee's contracts.

IV. Submission of Proposals and Communication

A. Deadline. Proposals must be received in-house by the Legislative Services Agency, on behalf of the Committee, no later than the time and date specified in Part I, Paragraph D.

B. Filing. A bidder shall submit a completed proposal to the Legislative Services Agency as follows:

1. **Electronic Version.** The bidder shall submit one copy of the completed proposal by electronic mail in an uncompressed electronic format drafted in Microsoft Word® or a similar word processing program to the Legislative Services Agency at the following address:
kathy.hanlon@legis.state.ia.us.
2. **Printed Version.** The bidder shall deliver 20 copies of a completed proposal in a printed format to the Legislative Services Agency at the following address:
Legislative Services Agency
Response to RFP
Attention: Ms. Kathleen Hanlon, Senior Research Analyst
State Capitol Building
1007 E. Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
3. **Fax Prohibited.** The Legislative Services Agency will not accept a proposal submitted by fax.

C. Verification. A bidder is exclusively responsible for verifying with the Committee the time and date that its proposal has been received by the Legislative Services Agency.

D. Incomplete Proposals. The Committee reserves the right to reject any proposal which is incomplete, as if it were a late submission.

E. Late Submissions. Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph, the Committee will not accept the late submission of a proposal. The Committee may extend the deadline for all potential bidders only if it finds that an extraordinary situation prevents one or more bidders from submitting timely proposals.

F. Bidder Questions or Concerns

1. Potential bidders are expected to raise questions or concerns about this RFP, including exceptions or additions, no later than the time and date specified in Part I, Paragraph D. Questions shall be submitted in writing, or in an electronic format, to the Legislative Services Agency.
2. All bidder questions and responses will be posted on the Iowa General Assembly's Web Site no later than the date specified in Part I, Paragraph D.

G. Contents.

1. Objectiveness. Proposals are of primary value to the Committee if they address the specifications and requirements identified in this RFP in a clear and concise manner. Special bindings, colored displays, and promotional materials are discouraged.
2. Information. Proposals must include complete and accurate information as required by this RFP. Proposals should include the following:
 - a. A detailed description of how the consultant will deal with each item outlined in the part of this RFP entitled Scope of Services.
 - b. A work plan narrative of no more than 20 pages specifying the staff, tasks to be performed, when the actual work will begin if the contract is awarded, and the completion date. A preliminary work program should be included. The Committee reserves the right to approve any subcontractors employed by the consultant.
 - c. A detailed resume, including references, and a time commitment for each professional or technical person to be assigned to the analysis. In employing research personnel for this analysis, preference shall be given to Iowa residents if qualifications are comparable. In the case of a consulting firm, the principal or manager who will serve as the director of the analysis must be identified.
 - d. Final reports or work products from other projects undertaken by the personnel to be assigned to this analysis, with particular emphasis on projects of similar scope and effort. Include the name and telephone number of a contact person representing the person or entity for whom such projects were undertaken. It is desirable that a summary of the projects be included in the proposal. The reports or work products may be attached as an appendix to the proposal and multiple copies of these reports or products are not required to be submitted.
 - e. An itemized budget projecting the cost of the analysis.
3. Alternatives. A bidder may elect to propose an alternative to a specification, or recommendations regarding alternative methods to satisfy the purposes and objectives of this RFP. If so, the bidder must identify the alternative and explain why it is proposed.
4. Contact Person. Bidders must designate one primary contact person, specifying a name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and FAX number.

H. Delayed Delivery. The contract will provide for a penalty for delays in the delivery of the required reports.

V. Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated by the Committee, which will select the proposal deemed most advantageous. The Committee may utilize its administrative staff and other persons selected by the Committee to assist in evaluating proposals. In selecting a proposal, the Committee may consider each of the following factors:

- A.** Consultant's proposed statement of work. Emphasis will be on the grasp of the project, the soundness of approach, and the quality of recommendations for modification, if any, to the Scope of Services.
- B.** Cost. It is expected that the amount of the bid is the consultant's maximum compensation under a contract, unless otherwise agreed to by the parties.
- C.** Ability to complete the project within the specified time frame.
- D.** Ability to establish positive working relationships with the Committee, the Committee's administrative staff, the Legislative Services Agency, other state agencies.
- E.** Background and previous experience of personnel (including consultant and subcontractors) to be assigned to the project and their demonstrated competence in the type of work each is to perform, including the quality of previous reports and work products. Special consideration will be given to consultants with a demonstrated ability to communicate in writing in clear and understandable language.
- F.** Capability to establish positive working relationships with the Committee, the Committee's partisan legislative staff, the Legislative Services Agency, other state agencies, and political subdivisions including community colleges.
- G.** Consideration will be given to management and project control, ability to commit staff within time requirements, and recent relevant performance record. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of entities for whom the consultant has previously conducted similar studies, even if in progress, should also be included in the materials submitted.
- H.** The Committee may give special consideration to consultants with demonstrated expertise in public postsecondary education institutions, dual enrollment, and postsecondary education articulation and accreditation.